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CIA back to school for touch of class

New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON—Twenty years after the Central Intelligence Agency was all but banished from American campuses, the CIA says it has re-established its ties and is receiving research and advice from a growing number of university professors.

Robert Gates, the deputy director of intelligence, said the agency had sought to accelerate a trend, begun under President Jimmy Carter, of soliciting help from "the best minds in the country."

But the CIA's dealings with professors have been challenged by critics in Congress and within the universities as a threat to the independence of academic research.

The new emphasis on seeking outside viewpoints was prompted, in part, by a review of past intelligence failures, Gates said. Some of these, such as mistaken predictions in the 1970s about the future of the Shah of Iran, could be traced, he said, to the development of a "U.S. government perspective."

"There were scholars out there saying the shah was in trouble, and somehow that never got incorporated into any official assessment," Gates said in an interview. "What we are after is people who will challenge us constructively, offer us a different perspective, who will stir up the pot a bit and who will help us consider all points of view, particularly the unorthodox."

"Large bureaucracies like this one have difficulty promoting imagination and creativity."

Gates said that about a fourth of the agency's intelligence estimates are now reviewed in draft form by professors or other outside experts, including retired military people. Previously only a "minuscule" amount of the agency's research was reviewed in this fashion, he said.

Since 1982, the CIA has been the host of 75 conferences a year in which its analysts met professors and experts outside the government, Gates said. Only three to four such meetings were held an-

nually in past years. In addition, agency analysts are attending more academic conferences on subjects of interest to the CIA.

The questions over the proper relationship between the CIA and academics came into sharp focus at Harvard University late last year in a dispute over the dealings between the agency and Nadav Safran, the head of Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. A. Michael Spence, dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, concluded in a report this month that Safran had violated Harvard's rules when he failed to disclose that the CIA had contributed \$45,000 to a conference on Islamic fundamentalism held at the university last year.

Safran also received a \$107,000 grant from the agency to support research on his latest book. The contract gave the agency the right to review the manuscript and stop it from being published and prohibited Safran from disclosing the source of his funds. Both conditions violate Harvard's rules. Safran is to resign his post as head of the center at the end of this academic year but remain a tenured professor at Harvard.

Rep. Don Edwards (D., Calif.), chairman of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, said the agency should publicly disclose all contracts with professors. Edwards contended the agency's support for Safran's research violated a 1976 CIA promise to Congress that it would not covertly sponsor publication of books in this country.

"They're not supposed to operate within the United States and as far as I'm concerned, this is operating within the United States," Edwards said.

Gates said the CIA had several types of dealings with professors. Most common, he said, were the conferences, sponsored by the agency or outside groups, in which academics and agency analysts discuss various international issues. These do not involve classified information, Gates said. Academic experts also are called upon

to review the agency's findings.

More rarely, he said, the agency contracts for research papers on particular topics. Finally, a handful of professors take leaves and are hired for year-long positions as scholars in residence at the CIA. The number of professors under contract is relatively small when compared to the "many hundreds" of academics who attend agency conferences and serve as paid or unpaid consultants, Gates said.

The CIA's early history in the 1950s was replete with senior scholars who took leaves to hold posts with the agency or worked as consultants. But Gates said that in the 1960s, the agency and other arms of the American government became "persona non grata" on the nation's campuses.

At that time, while many campuses were shaken by antigovernment demonstrations, it was disclosed that the CIA had covertly funded and manipulated the National Student Association and secretly used academics to write books and other materials to be used for propaganda purposes abroad.

Under Stansfield Turner, director of the CIA under Carter, the agency began to rebuild its ties to academic experts, and Gates said the Reagan administration had sought to broaden the relationship.